



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Farmers and ranchers urged to "Make Agriculture Count!"

Washington lags slightly behind in response rate for USDA census

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service have put out a call to farmers and ranchers to "Make Agriculture Count," the theme of the 2002 Census of Agriculture. The call came as USDA recognized that response rates are lagging behind previous censuses.

"In Washington, we are slightly behind the national average of a 54 percent response at this point, but we are more than 15 percent behind where we were at this point during the 1997 census," said Ray Garibay, Washington state statistician. Garibay noted that Lincoln County leads the state's 39 counties with a response rate of nearly 63 percent. On the lower response end, Ferry County is at 41 percent and Yakima County stands at 45 percent. By comparison, Missouri's statewide average is 65 percent, highest of the 50 states.

WSDA Director Valoria Loveland today urged farmers and ranchers to return their census forms to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"This census goes a long way in determining federal agricultural policy and what level of grants and programs are suitable for our ag community," Loveland said. "Farmers and industries that support agriculture need accurate information to determine issues ranging from what crops to plant to what locations may need additional equipment, supplies and other services. The data also help our industry compete for its share of the global food market."

The National Agricultural Statistics Service wants farmers, ranchers and agriculturalists from every sector of the industry to know how crucial it is that they complete and return their census forms. Not only does the census provide information for local and state agricultural investment decisions, it also helps local, state and national representatives and agencies make informed agricultural policy decisions. Information gathered also ensures quick access to vital local statistics in the event of a natural disaster or possible homeland security threat.

The census of agriculture is the sole source of comprehensive, detailed agricultural facts for every county in the United States, and is only conducted every five years. For more information, or for assistance in completing your census form, visit the USDA Web site at www.nass.usda.gov/census/ or call 1-888-4AG STAT.

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